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ENGL 3500

HW #8: Create a Character, Reflect on Your Prototype

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My character, Fuji, is a young boy who's born into the lowest class. Set in a world in which all humans have powers based on a certain belief system, Fuji is born into the lowest state of believing- State 0. Those who are of State 0 belief cannot utilize their innate powers; they are on par with normal humans and are shunned by the rest of society. However, it is possible to raise one's State by believing something into existence. Yet, many of State 0 cannot achieve this- and so, they are stuck in an endless cycle of remaining in State 0, causing the area designated to them to resemble an overpopulated slum.

What these people do not know, though, is that the world they live in is not actually real; it is the belief of the being who resides in the highest State, State 6. The one who is of State 6, referred to as the Sixth, belief is rumored to have the power to do anything and give anything, which is seen by the distribution of his own body parts to others. He may take a part of himself and gift it to another, allowing the receiver to have a segment of his powers.

Fuji and his only friend, Hana, try to make the most of life in the slums, until Hana is killed by her father after he suspects her of holding a part of the Sixth with her. Thus begins Fuji's journey to bring Hana back to life by venturing to the Sixth to ask for his blessing. Fuji must raise his belief, battle against those who hold the Sixth, and struggle to find his place in this unruly world while trying to revive his dearest friend.

In relation to Phillips, who in Chapter 2 of *Gamer Trouble* discusses the complexities behind character customization and presentation which evokes themes of racial biases, gender stereotypes, and lack of digital representation, my character hopes to break through some of the stereotypes, but may not fully. To preface, the "game" my character would come from would not have the ability of character customization, so the player would only be utilizing the premade character. This is both due to his prominent role in the story (in which he is not made to act as a self-insert) and the technological limitations I would face. Phillips discusses how technological constraints can lead to simplified character models and faces, which inadvertently leads to the character resembling "typical" or "racially-preferred" models, reinforcing gender and racial stereotypes. However, this is not always true; see the game *Thomas Was Alone*, in which all of the characters are extremely simplified, to the point where they are all simply colored blocks. Here, Phillips would argue that the simplification of such characters brings about racial and gender stereotypes; take for example, Laura, who is a pink block. Phillips would say that by choosing pink to represent a female character would downgrade her to a feminine stereotypical personality- girly, friendly, and cutesy. However, Laura does not exhibit these traits; instead she is depressed with low self-esteem. Circling back to Fuji, he hopes to break some of the racial and gender stereotypes set in place by modern-day media. He is disheveled, with long purple hair and eyelashes, a small frame, and tan skin. He is meant to not resemble any race as the world is, quite literally, fictional. His long hair and eyelashes, along with his small frame, often cause people to mistake him for a girl. Additionally, he is not a very put together character, unlike most main characters in media.

Yet, what is a character? Characters are figures in some story. They do not necessarily need to be a person to be a character- characters can be animals, fictional creatures, and even

inanimate objects. The only quality they must have is a mention or role played in the story they are set in. For example, a chair named Bob who is mentioned in the story but never speaks is a character. Likewise, a girl with no name that plays a pivotal role in the story is also a character. They are not bound by their actions or names, they simply must have some presence in the media they are depicted in. This definition of character leads to a blurred line between characters in video games versus those who reside in novels or films; arguably, there is no difference between a character from a game and those who are from other forms of media.

Finally, to reflect on the prototyping done in class on Monday, I'd like to mention the general flow in which I worked and some issues that I came across. The biggest issue was the time constraint; I wish I had more time to fully articulate my idea and bring a majority of it to life. Although I did have the storyboard done in the previous homework to build off of, creating the drawings of each scene and collectable objects took significant amounts of time, preventing me from completing some of the decoy areas of the level. Additionally, the freedom and responsibility that came with the large-sized paper was daunting, though that is an issue on my end. Since I am more comfortable drawing smaller images, having to triple my typical drawing size caused me to take more time than I needed to. In the future, I would prototype on normal letter-size paper. However, the activity was very enjoyable and eye-opening. The general flow that I followed on Monday is as follows: review storyboard from homework 7, gather materials, draw scenes from the visual novel, draw scenes from the puzzle-segment, and, lastly, draw collectable items. I was able to finish most of the scene which allowed me to see what items were necessary to escape, and what extra decoy objects or items that expand the story were needed in the opening scene.